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Directorate of Intelligence
18 June 1991

The Yugoslav People's Army in the Current Crisis [REDACTED]

Summary

Within the next few weeks the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) may be faced with the decision on whether to intervene to prevent the complete breakup of the Balkan republic. To date, the Army has limited its role to deterring or suppressing armed conflict among rival ethnic groups. We believe senior military officers have been reluctant to take a more direct role in the current crisis because they fear that large-scale, JNA involvement could prompt not only the breakup of the Army along ethnic lines, but also the disintegration of the federation. [REDACTED]

Although the JNA has been reluctant to intervene thus far, several precipitating scenarios—including Croatian secession or some explosive incident—still might prompt the Army to act. The JNA has units at heightened readiness in Croatia and Slovenia, and if it chooses to intervene, warning time probably would be short. In most scenarios, however, we probably would have indications several days before large-scale hostilities were imminent. [REDACTED]

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and may be directed to [REDACTED]

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Introduction: The Army's Role

The Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) is one of the few remnants of federal authority, but civilian control over it has been weakened. Powerful centrifugal forces, including Slovenian and Croatian independence movements, deeply rooted ethnic tensions, and serious economic problems continue to threaten Yugoslavia's national identity. The Communist Party, long the principal pillar of national unity, collapsed in 1990 but still has strong support in the Serb-dominated officer corps. The federal government is proving powerless as political leaders are unable to negotiate a solution to the governmental crisis. The collective presidency has been paralyzed in the wake of its failure to elect the Croatian candidate as President according to the scheduled rotation. Civilian control over the military has grown tenuous in the protracted crisis, and the logjam over the presidency has left the JNA without even the facade of a civilian commander in chief. [REDACTED]

The military leadership continues to support a unified Yugoslavia. [REDACTED] the military is cooperating with Prime Minister Markovic in his efforts to fill the power vacuum created by the ongoing dispute over the presidency. The armed forces have frequently voiced alarm over the nation's potential disintegration with tough rhetoric aimed at the republics. On several occasions this year, they have deployed forces following pronouncements on the need for civil order. [REDACTED]

Despite the saber rattling, the JNA has shown restraint over the past six months. It has limited its role largely to deterring or suppressing armed conflict among rival ethnic groups. The JNA, for example, has not tried to disarm Croatian and Serbian armed groups as the presidency called for on 9 May. In our view, senior commanders fear that the broad use of military force now could accelerate the disintegration of the federation. Moreover, we believe at least some commanders recognize that the corrosive effect of the political crisis on discipline and cohesion could cause the breakup of the Army. [REDACTED]

JNA Problems Mirror Yugoslav Society

The JNA's military capabilities gradually have been undermined by ethnic strife, manpower shortages, discipline, and financial problems rooted in the political crisis gripping Yugoslavia.

- **Ethnic Tensions.** Serbs and their close Montenegrin cousins make up 60 percent of the total officer corps, although a more balanced ethnic mix exists in the senior ranks. Various reports indicate friction between

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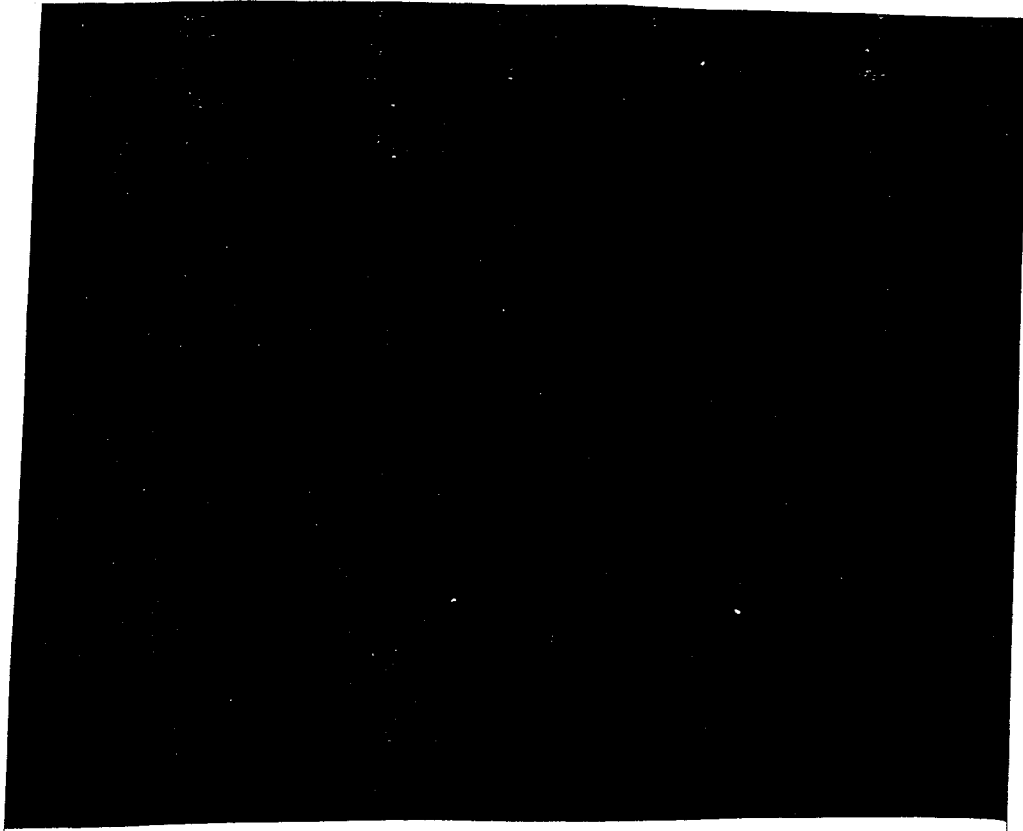
different groups has become more open and pronounced in recent months. [REDACTED] rivalries between Serbs and other ethnic groups pervade the lower and middle officer ranks.

- **Manpower and Discipline.** Slovenia refused to provide conscripts to the JNA against their will, and Croatia and Macedonia have stated that they want their draftees to serve only in their home republics. Many reservists simply ignored orders to report during a limited mobilization in early May, and discipline in the Army is eroding. The press has reported growing numbers of Slovenian and Croatian deserters. Recently a JNA Croat officer was court-martialed for refusing to act against Croatian forces.
- **Financial Problems.** For months, all the republics to one extent or another have refused to meet their obligations to the federal budget, which has reduced the flow of funds to the military. The JNA is increasingly unable to purchase supplies, uniforms, rations, and spare parts. Financial difficulties are also causing a serious deterioration of installations and equipment. The federal government has had to print money to meet the military payroll, and troop morale has almost certainly suffered from equipment shortages and pay problems. [REDACTED]

Scenarios for Intervention

Although now reluctant to intervene, the JNA may find itself in a set of circumstances in which senior officers feel compelled to act. While there are many specific events that probably would prompt the JNA to take matters into its own hands, we have identified four general precipitating cases:

- **Slovenian/Croatian secession.** The JNA appears resigned to Slovenia's secession, which Ljubljana says it will initiate by 26 June, and there are indications that the military is even preparing to withdraw forces from the republic. The Army, however, is unlikely to tolerate Croatia's secession--Zagreb has said it would parallel Slovenia's actions--without a territorial settlement between the Serbs and Croats regarding the large Serbian population in the Krajina region of Croatia.
- **An explosive incident.** As federal authority has evaporated and political tensions have mounted, much of the population has armed itself and formed local military units. An explosive incident--a major confrontation between armed groups, the murder of a key political figure, serious armed attacks on the JNA--would almost certainly cause the Army to counter unrest and protect itself.

- **Complete collapse of federal authority.** A prolonged inability to resolve the political deadlock over the rotation of the federal presidency, a failure by the federal assembly to renew the Markovic government's mandate, or the continued paralysis of the federal government could tempt the JNA leadership to try to restore order and unity. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] the Army may refrain from intervening until the deteriorating political and social situation raises popular pressure for military action.
 - **"Use it or lose it" dilemma.** Sporadic violence, nationalist propaganda directed at JNA personnel, and the debilitating impact of months of heightened readiness could all give senior JNA officers the perception of a rapidly deteriorating military force. Although probably the least likely among the four scenarios, the JNA might conclude it had to act before its effectiveness became so impaired that it could no longer function. [REDACTED]
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The republican authorities would almost certainly notify western officials and the media upon the slightest indication of federal action. [REDACTED]

Outlook

We believe the JNA prefers to follow its current, moderate approach so long as the political dialogue holds some hope of compromise. Croatia's secession without regard to the Serbian minority problem stands out as the immediate threat to a peaceful resolution. Under any precipitating scenario, the republics probably would resist a JNA attempt to impose a military solution forcefully, and a bloody, protracted civil war would follow. Republic armed forces, trained and equipped for guerilla warfare, would be a credible opponent in Yugoslavia's rugged terrain. If the JNA clashes violently with local forces, it will almost certainly break up eventually along ethnic lines and become a rump Serbian army. [REDACTED]

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